

Verdon Assails Ruhlmann For His Attacks on John Ferguson

Hoboken Billy Tells of Times When Ruhlmann Was Lobbying at Trenton for Corporations — Says He Sold Out to Democrats in Bayonne

"Billy" Verdon yesterday sent a personal letter to Civil Service Commissioner Carl Ruhlmann. It begins with "Dear Carl," and ends with "Au revoir, but not good-bye—Billy."

But in spite of the affectionate salutation, right in the first paragraph, Verdon "murders" the commissioner. And throughout the letter, the Hoboken Republican pillories Ruhlmann.

He pokes fun at him for his activities against the Jersey City and Hudson County Democratic employees, advising him to first clean house in his own bailiwick of Bayonne, where Ruhlmann is Republican leader.

Verdon defends Superintendent of Elections John Ferguson, who has been under attack by Ruhlmann and throws up to the commissioner his past record as a Republican, which Verdon strikingly contrasts with his present efforts on behalf of the party.

The complete Verdon letter follows:

"One Half One Percent" Job
Hon. Carl A. Ruhlmann,
Civil Service Commissioner,
97 West 34th street, Bayonne, N. J.
Dear Carl:

"I have been reading accounts in the newspapers every night concerning the things you are doing as Civil Service Commissioner. I commend you for what you have done, but suggest that you go all the way and don't 'pull your punches.' So far you have limited your activities to the same percentage that the Volstead Act limits the use of alcohol, one half of one percent. Do your job 100 percent.

"What you are doing, though, is going out of your way to criticize other Republican officials, telling them they are not doing their duty and from your standpoint are not 'raising hell in Paris.' Your many criticisms remind me of that old song of long ago, 'If I only could blot out the past what a different man I would be.'

"The collusion was started back in 1918 between the crowd you are with in the Republican Party and the Hague Democratic machine, when the agreement was made that Hague would throw your side enough support to help defeat my crowd in the Republican primaries, in return for which you fellows were to help Hague on election day. How faithfully this bargain was kept was borne out time and time again, as witness the returns in Hudson when Bugbee, Runyon and Whitney ran. What did you do to help the Republican Party then, when all this treachery was going on?

"Seglie's Lap Dog"
"When I was down in the legislature year after year trying to break down this collusion with legislation which I prepared, were you to be found on my side fighting for the cause of Republicanism and trying to have these bills passed? You were not. You were down at the sessions of the legislature in the interest of the Port Authority on whose payroll your name was reposing by grace of this collusion gang, lobbying for them and for big corporations also.

"When McDonald became county chairman and then received the appointment as head of the bureau of elections in 1923, you became a lap-dog for McDonald, Rotherham, Seglie and the rest of that crew. You even took a bill down to the legislature a few years ago which brought disgrace upon the Republican Party. Forget that?

"In 1926 when the permanent registration bill was before the legislature for consideration, I filed a brief with all the senators, pointing out just what would happen if this bill passed. I am enclosing a copy herewith and you will see that I hit the nail on the head at that time.

"Where were you at that time? Were you to be found advising against the adoption of that measure? No, you were a corporation lobbyist at the time and you kept away from me as if I had small-pox, because you knew I was making a battle for the Republican Party.

Charges "Sour Grapes"
"In the 1928 session, when the things I had prophesied under the permanent registration act had come to pass, I presented a bill to the legislature that provided for the creation of the office of Supervisor of Permanent Registration. This bill would have taken from the hands of Stoebling, the supervisory work of permanent registration and consolidated his duties with those of the

ATTACKS RUHLMANN



WILLIAM P. VERDON

County Board of Elections, with the exception of appointing election officers and supervising at recounts. The bi-partisan County Board of Elections, composed of two Democrats and two Republicans, have been in collusion for the past 10 years; they would have been stripped of all the essential powers of their office under my proposed bill, and would have lost the right of appointing employees for permanent registration work. The employees under this bill were not to come under the provisions of the civil service act. The bill provided that the supervisor would be appointed in joint session of the legislature, insuring the appointment of a Republican, who would then control this important election machinery. Where were you when this bill was before the legislature? What assistance did you render the Republican Party at that time? And now you talk of consolidating Stoebling's job with Ferguson's.

"In the same year, when my five-year campaign against McDonald had taken effect and when he was hanging over the ropes you were playing 'hide-and-go-seek' trying to land the job for yourself, even stating yourself that you were promised the job by Senator Edge, but Ferguson got it.

"Now, in a very unsportsmanlike manner which smacks of sour grapes, you think you have a fine chance to injure Ferguson; that is you just think you have.

"Capitalizing Publicity"
"You are trying to capitalize the publicity you are receiving for going after the Democrats the short distance you have as civil service commissioner. It might be well to point out that you cannot do otherwise than fight the Democrats if you hope to continue as civil service commissioner. The reason is that you are compelled to do so because you are working under the orders of the chairman of the civil service commission, Joseph A. Brohel, an up-standing citizen and an intensely interested Republican. Mr. Brohel is the man who whipped the Republican party back in shape in Bergen County every time it faltered, for several years past. Brohel would not tolerate you for a minute were you to fall down in the execution of his orders to bring about a house-cleaning in civil service in this county and the gestures you have thus far made have been done to satisfy him and save your job.

"When I was first informed that Brohel was appointed chairman of the commission on which you were appointed as a member. I made the comment that 'under Brohel, Ruhlmann will have to stand up as a Republican and he will have to make an about face in the interest of the Republican party.'

Claims His Plan Best
"You state that you have written to Senator Wolber to urge him to help bring about the consolidation of permanent registration, now under Stoebling, with that of the office of superintendent of elections, now under Ferguson. When I proposed in 1928 to consolidate the work of Stoebling and the county board, where the need for consolidation is more logical, I did not then write to Senator Wolber or other legislators to urge it.

"But you are trying yourself with the Commission and are proposing the present Boulevard be abolished, that the supervision of the Boulevard be vested in the Park Commission, and that the members of the park commission be appointed by the governor. You are a little late in this proposal also, Carl, because in 1927 I had a bill introduced which provided for the transfer of the Hudson Boulevard to the highway commission.

"I claim this to be a far better plan than yours for the reason that we have elected but one Republican governor out of the last four contests and the chances are not 100 to 1 that we will elect a Republican the next time. On the other hand, the highway board is composed of two Democrats and two Republicans.

"Under your plan the people of Hudson County would continue to be taxed for the maintenance and upkeep of this boulevard, which is in reality a vital artery of the highway system, used by the people of this and other states. For this reason I

should be relieved of the cost of maintenance of this boulevard.

"The Boulevard Commission in Hudson County is always in control of the Democrats two to one, the minority Republican member receiving no recognition as a Republican. Under the plan I provided for, the boulevard would be supervised by the bi-partisan highway board.

Demands Ruhlmann Make Good
"Under the plan if the governor did have the appointing power of the members of the park board who would supervise the boulevard, he would appoint as commissioners half-baked Republicans of the powder-puff variety, too nice to hurt the Democrats, but not so nice that they wouldn't sell out the Republicans and do business with the Democrats right off the reel.

"Where were you to be found at the time I was fighting in the interest of the Republican Party and trying to reduce the taxes of the people of Hudson County?

"There is an old saying, Carl, 'Shoemaker, stick to your last.' Go out and make good as a Civil Service Commissioner, but don't be criticizing those who were your bed-fellows for a long, long time, during which time you found no fault with their actions. Leave that to others who have been fighting the cause for 10 solid years.

"Your fight against Ferguson is not a fair one. You and your crowd have hobbles on Ferguson, along with a curb bit and a kicking strap. Your crowd has held him in check with your constant threats to go down to Davey Baird to have him kicked out of office if he did not appoint in his bureau, over which he is responsible, the misfits you would try to hand him.

"If you want to do the fair thing, go down to Davey Baird and to your friends in the Legislature, and tell them to give Ferguson a free line. Then if he doesn't make good after getting it it is up to others, like myself, to criticize him. But first I want to see him get a square deal and not be criticized by a man who has your political record and associations with the Democrats, Daly and Cronin, of Bayonne.

Criticizes "Pussy-Footing"
"I was a candidate against McDonald, in the open, for his job while you were pussy-footing it around and got the promise of the job for yourself. But you didn't get it and neither did I. Ferguson did get it and I am man enough to give him a man's chance to make good. While I hold no brief for Mr. Ferguson, he is at least entitled to a fair chance, which he has not been getting from your crowd.

"One of the reasons why I favored the consolidation of Stoebling's duties and those of the County Board of Elections under the office of supervisor and why I was opposed to the passage of the Permanent Registration Act was because I knew that in this county it would be administered by this same Stoebling. I helped to make Stoebling some years ago when his job was then of a minor nature and paying but \$1,000 a year, but when I was handling the work of the County Board of Elections some years ago I learned that Stoebling was so stupid that he was unqualified to run his office and even to make proper minutes of the board's meetings. Had it not been for Charlie Meyers, a Republican, and Joe O'Donnell, a Democrat, the assistant clerks, the board would have been compelled to let Stoebling go for incompetency. In opposing permanent registration I wanted to protect the people of Hudson County, particularly the Republicans, against Stoebling's stupidity, but you were nowhere to be found helping the cause at that time.

"Political Blackmail"
"Before making any suggestions how to run other offices, it might be well to reflect for a moment on the 1928 election contest for member of Congress and the shameful manner in which Hartley, the Republican candidate, was robbed in Bayonne by the election officers you have appointed as city chairman and for whose treacherous actions you alone are responsible.

"You have made many mistakes,

Carl; the least said about them the better—for you. If you would live them down, do so by doing real work in the Civil Service Commission, a very fruitful field. Don't do so, though, by criticizing those who are doing the best they can under the circumstances and by threatening every 10 minutes to invoke Davey Baird and the Legislature upon Ferguson and all others upon whom you would commit political blackmail. Sounds too much like the threat of a kid whose father is a cop.

"Attend to the affairs of your own office; you have plenty to do if you want to do it right and without pulling punches. And say, Carl, kick out all the Democrats who are serving as Republican members of the election boards in your own town, Bayonne.

"Au revoir, but not good-bye!
"BILLY VERDON."